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Form, Substance, and Power: The Body in "Paradise Lost"

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John Milton's Christian epic *Paradise Lost* is concerned with the story of the fall of man. The poem chronicles Satan's revolt in heaven all the way through man's eventual expulsion from Eden, all so that Milton may achieve his goal to "justify the ways of God to man" (I.26). The story is told through a first-person narrator, one with an omniscient view into the internal workings of all characters involved. However, this narrative is limited in that it can illustrate only "by likening spiritual to corporeal forms," which leaves many questions yet unanswered (V.573). We can never see the face of the Father, nor can we understand the nature of the angels, whose substance exceeds the limits of our imagination. It is from this that my inquiry stems: what is it about the human body, a body that functions somehow outside of our control and that controls us likewise, that makes us separates us from the divine. How do angelic bodies differ from ours, and what delineates our bodies' forms? The lacking ontology of these bodies and their material seems to me to be an intentional device employed by the narrative to elevate these differences, yet their meaning is left obscured. By carefully tracing the changing and evolving of bodies within the text, we may find that references to bodies indicate a division, a severing in internal mechanisms—the purest bodies are those with the fewest limitations and a strong, undivided will.

My inquiry of the body in *Paradise Lost* must naturally begin with the first explicit instance of body and physical sensation in the timeline of the poem. The birth of Sin, the first woman to exist within the universe of *Paradise Lost*, is introduced among the first bodily sensations present in heaven—her violent entry into the world is made manifest by "a sudden miserable pain…out of thy head I sprung" (II.752-758). Before she sprouted from Satan's—then Lucifer—head, God was the only generative entity in existence. Her birth introduces new possibilities into the world, as she is the first being that was not born directly from God's hands. Where the angels radiate the light of God, she instead most resembles Lucifer, her maker—her womanly body, equipped with a womb and nurturing breasts, is symbolic of his new fertile power. Her existence is a perversion of nature as God had established and the angels of heaven are both immediately repelled by—

> Amazement seized
>
> All the host of heaven; back they recoiled afraid
>
> At first, and called me Sin, and for a sign
>
> Portentous held me (II.758-761)

--and drawn to her—

> But familiar grown,
>
> I pleased, and with attractive graces won
>
> The most averse (II.762-764).

Though she is beautiful, she is a perversion of heavenly nature—it seems odd that the angels could be attracted to Sin, whose feminine body had never been seen before. Perhaps our answer lies with Satan, whom Sin says she is "likest [to] in shape and countenance bright " (III.

756). Sexual difference is established at the internal division of Satan—his disobedient thoughts manifest in an act of creation entirely without God.

The fluidity of the angels' bodies is directly opposite to that of Sin, which is rigid and limited in comparison. Sin tells Satan, "thyself in me thy perfect image viewing/ becam'st enamored, and such joy thou took'st/ with me in secret, that my womb conceived/ a growing burden" (Milton II.764-67). When he looks at her, a body and form distinct from his own, yet inexorably linked to his, he proceeds to immediately shove himself back into her. Raphael's account of angelic sex vastly differs from Sin's story:

> Whatever pure thou in the body enjoy'st
> (And pure thou wert created) we enjoy
> In eminence, and obstacle find none
> Of membrane, joint, or limb, exclusive bars:
> Easier than air with air, if spirits embrace,
> Total they mix, union of pure with pure
> Desiring (VIII.622-628).

Karma deGruy, who writes extensively on angelic love and limitations in her essay, "Desiring Angels: The Angelic Body in *Paradise Lost*," suggests that Milton "nevertheless portrays Sin as emerging from the undeniably substantive body of Satan in a violent fragmentation of the self that troubles the ontological and moral surety of unfallen angelic being. Satan's sex act both introduces and announces divisibility—and division—into heaven" (deGruy 136). I agree with deGruy in that the differences between the angels' mutable and the humans' fixed bodies highlight the dangerous potential for permanent corruption or "divisibility." Satan's disobedient actions towards freedom from God, for instance, result in his body's fixed parameters and

limitations. She continues,

> In imagining angelic sex and having Raphael endorse sex so warmly, Milton rescues sexuality from sin and erotic activity from being only a pale, imperfect, and limited shadow of divine love. On the contrary, erotic activity is privileged by being granted to angels whose undivided natures allow them an unproblematic satisfaction of embodied appetite...The mixing of human "flesh with flesh" and "soul to soul" is certainly a more "restrained" experience compared to the total mixing of angels in whose interpenetration the self is not defined or limited by any fixed bodily configuration. (deGruy 124)

If pure angelic erotic activity is indeed privileged, then Satan and Sin's inability to be joined in this way is predicated on their divided nature—their sex is much more like that of humans', constrained by substantive bodily limitations and results in bodily propagation. More than just a splitting of bodies, Sin's birth reflects an irreversible change in his materiality, one that is so subversive that it requires the creation of a form distinct from the rest of the angels' to reflect it.

Lucifer began to plot his rebellion against God out of jealousy when the Son is established as the new leader of the angels, the position which Lucifer had held previously. It is my belief that it is not merely jealousy that drives him to revolt, but that it is a deeper sense separation and disconnect created by the Son.

Before the introduction of the Son, Lucifer had served as the chief seraph and head of all the angels in heaven—Raphael describes him as "he of the first, / if not the first archangel, great in power, / in favor and pre-eminence," and "for great indeed/ his name, and high was his degree in heaven" (V.659-661; 706-7). His "pre-eminence" and high degree suggest that his position placed him not only superior to the other angels, but also in the seat of power second only to the

Father. The functions and organization of heaven's hierarchy are never elaborated by the text, except for when the Father introduces the Son:

> Your head I him appoint;
> And by myself have sworn to him shall bow
> All knees in heaven, and shall confess him Lord:
> Under his great vicegerent reign abide
> United as one individual soul
> Forever happy (V.606-611).

The Father's speech suggests that hierarchy of angels under the Son's rule would be nullified, allowing for total equality among them. However, as such a high-ranking angel, Lucifer's position would be compromised by total equality, and he "thought himself impaired" by the the Son's new order (V.664). When he gathers the not-yet-fallen angels, he opens his speech with the same outrage:

> Thrones, dominions, princedoms, virtues, powers,
> If these magnific titles yet remain
> Not merely titular, since by decree
> Another hath to himself engrossed
> All power, and us eclipsed under the name
> Of king anointed (V.772-77).

Peter Berek, in "'Plain' and 'Ornate' Styles and the Structure of *Paradise Lost,*" suggests that "Satan's characteristic use of language treats words as entities of an independent value and existence…Satan ignores the truth that one's rank in the chain of being is fixed by one's nature and not by the name by which it is called" (Berek 239). His rhetoric is both confusing and

dazzling in this way—he suggests that the angels' ranks in the hierarchy are not "merely titular," and should be maintained, but that the Son's "name/ of king" is unrelated to his power or worth. He continues: "Him coming to receive from us/ knee-tribute yet unpaid, prostration vile, / too much to one, but double how endured, / to one and to his image now proclaimed?" (V.781-84). He purposefully conflates the Son with the Father here: the first "him" appears to reference the Son, who Satan believes has not yet earned the right to be called king, while the reference to "one" would seem to be a reference to the Father. In doing this, he also conflates their worth, leading the angels to question whether the Father too is worthy of their praise. He says,

> That we were formed then say'st thou? And the work
> Of secondary hands, by task transferred
> From Father to his son? Strange point and new!
> Doctrine which we would know whence learned: who saw
> When this creation was? Rememb'rest thou
> Thy making, while the maker gave thee being? (IX.853-58)

This is echoed later by Raphael, who notes in his account of Earth's creation that he was not a witness to it. However, Satan's rhetorical appeal comes from the very fact of the limitations of memory—he suggests to them that they were "self-begot, self-raised," and leads them towards the same disobedient exploration of their potential to self-movement that had befallen him (V.860).

The differences between the fallen and unfallen angels' bodies are not entirely clear. We get an especially perplexing example of this in the descriptions of the war in heaven, a battle fought by two armies of angels who are "incapable of mortal injury/ imperishable, and though pierced with wound, / and by native vigour healed" (VI.434-36). Satan leads his rebel army,

which comprised of a third of heaven's angels, after having seduced them to disobedience. The first day of battle ends in a confrontation between Michael and Satan, wherein Michael manages to slice him nearly in half. And yet, despite his ability to heal, Satan insists that "perhaps more valid arms, / weapons more violent, when next we meet, / may serve to better us" (VI.338-340). Interestingly, in this same speech, Satan says, "if other hidden cause/ left them superior, while we can preserve/ unhurt our minds and understanding sound, / due search and consultation will disclose" (VI. 442-445). Raphael shares no account of the unfallen angels' capacity for pain, even during the war, making Satan's battle strategies appear pointless and crude. The crucial differences between the rebel army and God's lies in the very fact that they were disobedient; as the Father says to the Son, "equal in their creation they were formed, / Save what sin hath impaired" (VI.690-91). Where God had once instilled angelic knowledge, brutal arrogance and wrong reason now resides, and Satan's rebellion easily falls when confronted by the Son himself at the end of the war.

This again is why the feminine body is the furthest from God—the beauty of the female form seduces innocent angels and man away from divinely given right reason. Beauty in the poem is marred by its potential for distraction from God and divine love and is often aligned with untempered passion and desire. deGruy writes that "division is figured as a rational being erring by excessive passivity in the face of beauty; to be enamored is to fall into improper subjugation," suggesting that the moments in the poem where a male or masculine figure remain keep their rationality despite their enamor are privileged (deGruy 136).

As with Sin, the birth of her and Satan's child, Death, is wrought with bodily pain and sensation:

At last this odious offspring whom thou seest

Thing own begotten, breaking violent way

Tore through my entails, that with fear and pain

Distorted, all my nether shape thus grew

Transformed. (Milton II.781-85)

This is the only example of such a bodily birth in the universe of *Paradise Lost*. Though Sin was extracted from Satan's thoughts, and Eve is implied to have been crafted from Adam's rib, Death is the first to be nurtured in woman's womb, and his birth mirrors the violence in which he was conceived. He is born in hell after the war in heaven has ended, alone with Sin. Formless, shadowy, and born with an insatiable hunger, Death is the consummate manifestation of the chaotic darkness that of life completely void of God's light that Satan intends to impose upon the world. Oddly, the narrator's description of Death's formless body—"if shape it might be called that shape had none/ distinguishable in member, joint, or limb"—uses the same language as Raphael's later account of angelic sex (II.666-667). Perhaps Death is an image of the dangerous potential of devolved angels devoid of divine love.

John P. Rumrich, in his article "Milton's God and the Matter of Chaos," examines the chaotic potency of wombs in *Paradise Lost,* proposing that they echo the potential latent in the allegorical representations of chaos within the poem. He suggests that Satan is trapped in "an intensely recursive pattern that pervades his activity in *Paradise Lost*...the pattern of uterine intrusion and abortive, explosive birth...because of the lethal potential of [the] womb as a weapon against God" (Rumrich 1042). We see this perhaps most clearly in the unholy trio: Sin "explodes with flame from the original womb of evil—Satan's imagination," and Death neatly follows suit, bursting from Sin's loins in a similar manner (Rumrich 1042). The hellhounds, the spawn of Death and Sin, are "hourly conceived/ and hourly born, with sorrow infinite/ to [Sin],

for when they list into the womb/ that bred them they return" (Milton II.796-799). Like Death, the demon dogs are born in the absence of God, and appear to be so far removed from divinity that they fail to have an independent life or consciousness of their own. Instead, the beasts feed at Sin's flesh and tear away at what remains of her bowels. This is Sin's punishment for allowing Satan to use her womb as a weapon, thus allowing Death to enter the world—an endless cycle of pain and torment to reflect the misery she had brought to the world.

It seems clear following this logic why Satan would choose to tempt Eve rather than Adam. What does not follow, however, is why God would create Eve in the same form as Sin. It seems to me that, like in the case of Sin, Eve's gender coincides with a separation from God and a dividing of spirit.

In Book VIII, Adam tries to recall his first moments of consciousness to Raphael. Charles Monroe Coffin, in his article "Creation and the Self in Paradise Lost," suggests that the establishment of the human self, or of man's ability to distinguish himself from others and identify the essential qualities of himself, is the consummation of God's creation in the poem. Of Adam's account, wherein we observe Adam as he discovers his selfhood, Coffin explains,

> The following are stressed: his sense of connection with the Deity even before it is confirmed by revelation; the counterpointing fact of awareness of his separate existence, felt in the loneliness of 'unity defective,' which later prompts his desire for Eve; and the satisfaction of her company as marked by God's unnoticed withdrawal and the narrowing of Adam's detachment exclusively to her. (Coffin 5)

Indeed, we see Adam awaken, look immediately to the sky, then to nature around him, and it is after this that he becomes acutely aware of his own body. He says, "My self I then perused, and limb by limb/ surveyed…but who I was, or where, or from what cause/ knew not"

(VIII.267-271). He studies his body as something as foreign and new to him as the garden and its creatures. Curiously, when he lies down to sleep that night, he recalls feeling as if he were "passing to [his] former state/ insensible, and forthwith to dissolve," when it is in that dream that he is closest to God (VIII.290-91). This is again curious—Adam's confidence in the legitimacy of his dream so soon after lecturing Eve for hers is starkly disconcerting. He tells her that reason

> Then retires
> Into her private cell when nature rests.
> Oft in her absence mimic fancy wakes
> To imitate her; but misjoining shapes,
> Wild work produce oft, and most in dreams,
> Ill matching words and deeds long past or late. (V.108-113)

It seems to me that the Adam before Eve, before the division of his body and spirit, is the true, pure image of mankind. His sleep allowed his mind to transcend the limitations and senses of his body to communicate with God, which in the state he tells the story, is now "insensible."

When Adam is first roaming the Garden, watching and naming the animals, he is filled only with curiosity and love for a God he yet does not know. It is only after he is confronted with the Father that he becomes aware of his loneliness, saying, "In solitude/ what happiness, who can enjoy alone, / or all enjoying, what contentment find" (Milton VIII.364-66). God suggests to Adam that he, the sovereign body of the garden, though "know'st thou not/ their language and their ways, they also know/ and reason not contemptibly" (Milton VIII.372-74). When Adam persists, God shares his empathy:

> What think'st thou then of me, and this my state,
> Seem I to thee sufficiently possessed

Of happiness, or not? who am alone

From all eternity, for none I know

Second to me or like, equal much less.

How have I then with whom to hold converse

Save with the creatures which I made, and those

To me inferior, infinite descents

Beneath what other creatures are to thee? (VIII.403-411)

Through this, we may understand the reason behind man's creation. Adam is placed in the garden as the supreme and wisest, and is given the task of naming and ruling the land and animals. Had Adam stayed obedient and grew wise enough, he would have been able to transcend his body and be as the angels are, as Raphael tells him. Adam would then be more like God than the angels are for overcoming this challenge and sharing with God this loneliness.

I would like to pause here briefly to discuss the differences in materiality between man's bodies and those of the angels. It would be wrong to assume the angels are without bodies entirely or to assume them as being insubstantial. Rather, the angels appear to be of an entirely different material, the likes of which we may only understand "by likening spiritual to corporeal forms, / as may express them best" (V.573-74). Raphael tells Adam and Eve

And from these corporeal nutriments perhaps

Your bodies may at last turn all to spirit,

Improved by tract of time, and winged ascend

Ethereal, as we, or may at choice

Here or in heavenly paradise dwell;

If ye be found obedient, and retain

Unalterably firm his love entire

Whose progeny you are. (V.496-502)

I do not take Raphael's prediction to mean that man will simply shed their bodies, but rather that they may one day soothe the tensions created in the divide between body and spirit that earthly limitations have imposed upon them (V.492-500). As deGruy points out, "we must understand such an angelic ideal not as a disembodied existence but instead as a differently bodied existence. In this cosmos, spiritual beings are by definition also material" (deGruy 120). The angels' bodies appear in varying degrees of corporeality, though all are clearly substantive.

Raphael attempts to clarify this when arrives in paradise and sits down to eat the food provided by Adam and Eve. He says,

Therefore what he gives

(Whose praise be ever sung) to man in part

Spiritual, may of purest spirits be found

No ingrateful food: and food alike those pure

Intelligential substances require,

As doth your rational; (Milton Boon V.404-409)

and:

Flowers and their fruit

Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed

To vital spirits aspire, to animal,

To intellectual, give both life and sense,

Fancy and understanding. (V.483-487)

The angels need not eat to sustain themselves the way Adam and Eve do. Rather, in sampling the earth's fruits they fulfill a spiritual need, enjoying the full use of taste and other senses granted to beings lower than them. Like humans, they turn corporeal food to incorporeal energy and, in the process, find pleasure in the experience of eating as appetitive creatures. Likewise, angels take pleasure in sex and are able to morph their bodies in such a way as to enjoy it to its full potential "nor restrained conveyance need/ as flesh to mix with flesh, or soul with soul" (VIII.629-630).

The difference between angelic and human bodies appears to be related to the differences in the experience of pleasure. Raphael cautions,

> If the sense of touch whereby mankind
> Is propagated seem such dear delight
> Beyond all other, think the same vouchsafed
> To cattle and each beast; which not to be
> To them made common and divulged, if aught
> Therein enjoyed were worthy to subdue
> The soul of man (VIII.579-585).

Because humans rely on their senses—they enjoy taste so that they will eat and physical pleasure to procreate, etc.—they are liable to their letting their bodily appetites lead them astray. Their work in paradise is intellectual, and should they choose to hedonistically privilege their bodies' fulfillment over their minds', they are no better than beasts.

The human body is prone to similar faults as the fallen angels'. The pure angels are privileged in that they do not have to reckon with bodies with competing desires—rather, their desire is shown to be fixedly intelligential. Satan's desire for Sin, and Death's for Sin after, is completely void of this security. They are prone to passion and lust, and experience these in

place of divine love. In the case of mankind, Adam tells Raphael that it was when he viewed Eve that "passion first I felt, / commotion strange, in all enjoyments else/ superior and unmoved here only weak/ against the charm of beauty's powerful glance" (VIII.530-33). Joseph H. Summers in his essay "The Two Great Sexes of *Paradise Lost*," writes that while sexuality is an important part of man's development, examples of it within the text are overwhelmingly negative and perverse. He notes, "'Lust' in *Paradise Lost* is always evil, but it is never identified with normal sexual love. It is opposed to love, for it inevitably implies a humiliation of its sexual object" (Summers 4). For Adam, he becomes blind to the beauty of God's other creations after he is introduced to Eve. He fails, however, to see Eve as a person, and treats her, as Summers suggests, like a delicate object. These are wanton desires that stem from bodily appetites, those that become paramount with the dividing of self within the poem.

When Adam receives his mate from God, he is irreparably torn and compromised as a result. God creates Eve in Adam's own likeness and from his own rib in his dream, and makes her his perfect complement. This presents an especially perplexing problem: either God had failed to make Adam "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall," and gave to Eve the essential parts that Adam lacked, or else he took from Adam something crucial to his being to make Eve such (III.99). And yet, by undermining the omniscience or omnipotence of God in *Paradise Lost*, we tread on dangerous ground.

In Book III, we see the Father speak to the Son about the future of man following Satan's revolt. He says,

> As if predestinated overruled
> Their will, disposed by absolute decree
> Or high foreknowledge

.....

They trespass, authors to themselves in all

Both what they judge and what they choose; for so

I formed them free, and free they must remain. (III.114-124)

Adam's choice to demand a mate despite God's insistence to the contrary is his first trespass. Some scholars of Milton—I turn to Coffin again as an example—tend to believe this act is one that showcases Adam's autonomy as a reflection of God within him. He writes,

> It is his realization that his relation with God is not coercive, but generous enough to accommodate an instinctual desire which is felt to be consistent with his nature, even when this desire is for connection with something other than his Creator. How far the achievement of independence has gone in the direction of making this radical substitution of allegiances is nicely acknowledged by God himself...the idea pleases God so well, falling in line with the divine intention which Adam has been brought round to expressing as his free choice, that God lets him collaborate in her production. (Coffin 13-14)

What Coffin, among others, fails to note are the disobedient undertones of Adam's request. He does not revolt explicitly like Satan does, but rather he defies God's wishes in the face of God himself. Of man, the Father says, "the first sort by their own suggestion fell, / self-tempted, self-depraved" (III.129-130). It was an act of his own volition that made Adam plead for a partner—the only identifiable cause being his encounter with another intellectual being, only to be told he is to be the only one in Eden. His divergence from God's orders results in his fragmented body and divided will.

The emergence of Eve as woman reflects this division: where mankind was once one singular entity, there are now separate, divisible, gendered forms. Just like with the emergence of Sin, Eve's introduction to the world is marked by a violent, bodily extraction from Adam—"Who stooping opened my left side, and took/ from thence a rib, with cordial spirits warm, / life-blood streaming fresh; wide was the wound" (VIII.465-67)—followed by Adam helplessly admiring her form—

> Manlike, but different sex, so lovely fair
> That what seemed fair in all the world, seemed now
> Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained
> Sweetness into my heart, unfelt before,
> And into all things from her air inspired
> The spirit of love and amorous delight" (VIII.471-73).

That is, Adam, despite having seen the "shape divine" (VIII.294) of God in his dream, finds Eve to be the most beautiful in the world, and feels he must "find her, or forever to deplore/ her loss, and other pleasures all abjure" (VIII.480-81). The ambiguity of "seemed" in his speech indicates the potential latent in her that he sees—nothing about her is yet definite, especially since he is still dreaming, but she seems to be all that was missing in his world, which now "seemed" dull without her.

After Eve is introduced to Adam, he loses the connection with God he had achieved in his dream—as Coffin had noted, he is so enamored of Eve, that he fails to notice God's departure. When he thanks his creator for fulfilling his wish, he says,

> Giver of all things fair, but fairest this
> Of all thy gifts, nor enviest. I now see

> Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself
> Before me; woman is her name, of man
> Extracted; for this cause he shall forego
> Father and mother, and to his wife adhere. (VIII.493-498)

From the line break on "forego" and the lingering trochee on "father," Adam's speech indicates the severe shift in his allegiance from God to Eve. Even he is aware enough to note "in outward also her resembling less/ his image who made both/…all higher knowledge in her presence falls/ degraded" (VIII.543-552). What he loves her in her, above all else, is how she mirrors him.

Eve's account of first consciousness varies only slightly from Adam's. Like him, she recalls first immediately awakening and "wondering where/ and what I was, whence thither brought, and how" (Book III.450-51). Unlike Adam, she does not instinctively feel the presence of the divine above her, and instead found a pool in which she first found her reflection. Critics of Milton have long since debated the allusions to Narcissus here. Summers notes,

> Her fascination with her own image is a natural and inevitable potentiality for any free creature of perfect beauty, unaware of its relationships to the freedom of beauty of other creatures and ignorant of love…But the point of Eve's narration is the contrast rather than the comparison with the original Narcissus…Eve's early experience provides the crucial evidence that there could be no paradise for her apart from her relationship with Adam. (Summers 12)

And yet Eve's would seem to indicate the opposite. Her first experience with her own reflection is neither a realization of perfect beauty, nor is it an account of her and Adam's paradisal love. Rather, as she gazes into the lake,

> A shape within the watery gleam appeared

Bending to look on me, I started back,

It started back, but pleased I soon returned,

Pleased it returned as soon with answering looks

Of sympathy and love. (IV.461-465)

When she finds—by moving and observing the figure in the water—that the image she sees in her own, she is immediately filled with a sense of comfort, unlike the unbearable pain of loneliness that Adam had. She is pleased with her own reflection in large part because the smile reflected back at her is filled with "sympathy and love," and not because it is beautiful. By being able to recognize her own reflection and be comforted by it is indicative of the independence that is unique to Eve. Coffin agrees that, "she has an identity as unique as Adam's, and in fact, a superior independence…she can tolerate aloneness better than Adam can" (Coffin 14). Adam appears to be aware of this, noting "authority and reason on her wait/ as one intended first, not after made/ occasionally; and to consummate all" (VIII.554-56). In this, Eve succeeds in the crucial way that Adam had failed by calling for her creation.

Their differing levels of independence correspond directly with their responsibility in the fall of man. The two of them separate to do their work following an argument: Eve suggests they work separately in order to be more efficient, but Adam insists they stay together. He tells her,

For nothing lovelier can be found

In woman, than to study household good,

And good works in her husband to promote.

Yet not so strictly hath our Lord imposed

Labor, as to debar us when we need

Refreshment, whether food, or talk between,

Food of the mind, or this sweet intercourse. (IX.232-38)

While Adam is correct in believing that their primary job in paradise is to learn and grow with each other through the experience of divine love, they are given the task of creating their new world from the roots God had given them. Though he, as the man, is the leader of the two, his suggesting that Eve's only purpose lies in her ability to satisfy his sexual and appetitive desires not only undermines her own importance, but showcases a distinct lack of understanding of the orders established by God. He says, "for smiles from reason flow, / to brute denied, and are of love the food, / love not the lowest end of human life," and yet fails to understand the importance of their position as the only reasonable animals in Eden (IX.239-241). Though he is sufficiently knowledgeable from his conversations with Raphael, there is a marked flaw in his reason. This is in stark opposition to Eve, who was not present for the entirety of Raphael's visit. She is profoundly logical in her arguments, and succeeds in carefully deconstructing each of Adam's protests. When Adam cautions that they should not be separated because of Satan's intentions, she tells him,

And what is faith, love, virtue, unassayed
Alone, without exterior help sustained?
Let us not then suspect our happy state
Left so imperfect by the maker wise,
As not secure to single or combined.
Frail is our happiness, if this be so,
And Eden were no Eden thus exposed. (IX.335-341)

The repetition and rhythmic meter of her lines is reminiscent of God's conversation with the Son earlier in the poem, "to pray, repent, and bring obedience due. / To prayer, repentance, and

obedience due, / though but endeavored with sincere intent," and her account of Eden mirrors God's explanation of free will and true love (III.190-92).

I think it may be important to note here the corporeal nature of the language of the poem itself. The poem functions distinctly as a body in its own right—it encapsulates the story of original sin in a narrative structure that not only forces us to radically revaluate our conventions of heroism in epics, but also pervades the time and action of the events within it. Peter C. Herman discusses the power of Milton's use of uncertainty—through the use of what he refers to as "the Miltonic 'or'"—in his essay, "*Paradise Lost*, the Miltonic 'Or,' and the Poetics of Incertitude." He suggests that "Milton consistently presents us with explicit unresolved choices," such as in the ambiguity found between competing narratives (Herman 193). For example, of Raphael and Adam's differing accounts of the creation and purpose of man he says,

> In Raphael's version, God creates "Female for Race," yet in Adam's version, the emphasis is not on propagation, but on society…While Adam eventually gets around to mentioning the continuation of the species (8.419-27), the issue is always subordinated in Adam's mind to his desire for someone or something that would be his intellectual equal. (Herman 195)

I agree with Herman that Paradise Lost is structured in such a way wherein these antinomies are highlighted so as to be interrogative, but in this instance especially, I believe the poem works to be overtly declarative. The length of Adam's speech about his love for Eve at the end of Book VIII (lines 470-559), when contrasted with his impersonal account of meeting with the divine, makes a mockery of Adam. He speaks of the power her beauty holds, that her beauty is the greatest in all of creation, and yet that God "on her bestowed/ too much ornament, in outward show/ elaborate, of inward less exact," and that

When I approach

Her loveliness, so absolute she seems

And in herself so complete, so well to know

Her own, that what she wills to do or say,

Seems wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best (VIII. 537-39; 546-550).

At once he is questioning God's perfection, suggesting that he made Eve incorrectly so as to be as bewitching as she is, and then uses silly, made up superlatives to describe her perfect nature. The absurdity of his speech is followed by an equally absurd response—Raphael chastises Adam "with contracted brow," and advises him "with honor thou mayst love/ thy mate, who sees when thou art seen least wise" (VIII.560; 577-78). The humor of this moment does not take away from the seriousness of his offense; rather, the way it is presented makes clear the importance of moderating enamor is and, conversely, the absurdity of privileging desire and beauty over divine love.

Adam's failure to keep at his side leaves him with terrible longing, "her long with ardent look his eye pursued/ delighted, but desiring more her stay" (IX.397-98). Perhaps, we are led to believe, if he had simply asked her to stay because he loves her, she may have. His attempts to persuade her with demeaning arguments and flawed logic rather than by expressing his true feelings marks a division between them. He conceals the truth in his heart from Eve, for whom he was given specifically to love. Stella P. Revard in "Eve and the Doctrine of Responsibility in *Paradise Lost,*" contemplates the responsibility of Eve and God in the fall. She says of Adam, "if he has held back from urging her consent, with hopes undoubtedly that she will volunteer to stay as a spontaneous gesture of love, he is not guilty of negligence" (Revard 73). And certainly we may agree, but this argument fails to address the difference in education between the two.

Though Eve knows that the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge is forbidden to her, she did not hear Raphael's account of obedience, nor the beguiling efforts Satan used to sway heaven's angels. To be given instructions without the moral implications or any sort of context whatsoever would be an understandably confusing situation, and Eve cannot be faulted for her failure to resist given these circumstances. This is why Satan's seduction is successful: he plays into her curious and logical nature, and neatly fills in the gaps left by Adam's instructions. He says,

> Shall that be shut to man, which to the beast
> Is open? Or will God incense his ire
> For such a petty trespass, and not praise
> Rather your dauntless virtue
> ...Of good, how just? Of evil, if what is evil
> Why not known, since easier shunned? (IX.691-99)

It should be noted here too her body's appetite role in her fall. The action of the poem brilliantly demonstrates the limitations of man even before the fall. Where Eve first uses her reason to approach the situation—

> In her ears the sound
> Yet rung of his persuasive words, impregned
> With reason, to her seeming, and with truth;

--which is obscured by her hunger—

> Meanwhile, the hour of noon drew on, and waked
> An eager appetite, raised by the smell
> So savory of that fruit, which with desire,
> Inclinable now grown to touch or taste

Solicited her longing eye (IX.737-743).

Her hunger manifests itself in the "seeming" potential satisfaction of all her senses; she desires, hungers, wants to taste, smell, see, and touch the fruit. Moreover, the fruit may fulfill her intelligential needs, just as eating foreign fruits does for the angels.

We may wonder then, not why she ate the fruit, but why Adam would shield her from the knowledge granted to him by the divine. Perhaps he simply underestimated her, yes; but in looking to the emotional nature of Adam, coupled with his idolatrous love of Eve, we may see it as a matter of pitiful arrogance on his behalf, wherein he had hoped that Eve would obey him by his word alone.

Eve undoubtedly bears responsibility in eating the fruit in defiance of these laws, but she does not sin against God in doing so. Rather, it is Adam who, with full knowledge and reason both, in addition to the connection he once had with God, who sins explicitly against his maker. This sin is two-fold: one is the actual defiant action of consumption, and the other is his privileging Eve over God. He cries, "should God create another Eve, and I/ another rib afford, yet loss of thee/ would never from heart; no no, I feel/ the link of nature draw me" (IX.910-13). Had he retained the love of God's grace as he had felt before the creation of Eve, we may assume that he would have thought to beg for God's forgiveness. However, by this point, he has already been corrupted by the temptations of bodily desire and a love of his own image. And thus, he eats.

In their fallen state, they lose all connection to God's grace and mistake their similar corruption for unity—as Eve says, "equal joy, as equal love; / disjoin us, and I then too late renounce/ deity for thee, when fate will not permit" (IX.882-84). She implores him to eat, saying

Adam, from whose dear side I boast me sprung

And gladly of our union hear thee speak,

One heart, one soul in both: whereof good proof

This day affords, declaring thee resolved,

Rather than death or aught than death more dread

Shall separate us. (IX.965-970)

Their love for each other grows dirty when void of God, and their passion turns quickly to disgust. What they fail to see is that the constraints of flesh prevent them from ever truly being unified, even in their unfallen bodies. In their postlapsarian state, they no longer make love to fulfill a spiritual desire for closeness—instead, their sex is described as "love's disport," a mild distraction from their realizing what had truly been lost (IX.1041). Ulreich contends, "what Adam and Eve gain from their fall is not the moral knowledge of good, which had been theirs all along, but the doom of knowing good only by separating it from the evil in themselves" (Ulreich 356).

When the Son initially shares his plan to redeem mankind by returning to earth as human, it seems in many ways a fool's errand as so much of the poem is predicated on the perfection of the Son and his power. For him to open himself up to temptation, even a greater temptation than that which befell Adam and Eve, will be meaningless if he remained divinely perfect. But this task takes on new significance following man's fall—where unfallen human bodies were subject to desires that lead them astray, fallen human bodies are even more so: love, for the fallen man, must contend with the powerful sway of lust and shame; beauty with self-consciousness and jealousy; divine love with fear of God, etc. All of these human conditions hold the potential to compromise the Son's divine perfection in the same ways they did Adam and Eve. In Ulreich's

terms, "in the glory of his resurrection, transplanted in the body of Christ, man shall be both God and man…he in us and we in Him" (Ulreich 366).

Though desolate, distraught, and without the safety of paradise, Adam and Eve take their leave from Eden with their faith intact. Still trapped in the bodies that estranged them from their divine father, the parents of mankind "hast attained the sum/ of wisdom," by the poem's end, knowledge that exceeds anything they may have learned in paradise (XII.575-76). Their experiences brought to them complete knowledge of loss and pain, and the depraved state of humanity promises to bring in generations of more torment. But in doing so, they learned the true extent of God's love for them—upon their exodus, Michael tells them that God intends

> To judge the unfaithful dead, but to reward
> His faithful, and receive them into bliss,
> Whether in heaven or earth, for then the earth
> Shall be all paradise, far happier place
> Than this of Eden, and far happier days. (XII.461-465)

Mankind therefore finds not a paradise lost, but learns to find it anew within themselves; for heaven's angels and man as well, the Son intends to repair the pain of separation by integrating himself into all, by unifying us all. And this is where the poem leaves us, with the promise of the Son's future success. His ability to transcend the desires and distractions of the human body, of the angels' hierarchy, and of the infinite space between proves him to be of the purest material of all. In the last lines of Paradise Lost, we watch Adam and Eve, "they hand in hand with wandering steps and slow, showing the body's potential, despite its faults, to unite (XII.648).